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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL STUDIES CLASS OF 2016!



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The Graduate Theology Grant supports over sixty-five MA theology/pastoral theology students experiencing financial need.

Elisa Z. and Neil R. Shambaugh Scholarship

This scholarship supports graduate students with high academic merit. The recipient of the Elisa Z. and Neil R. Shambaugh Scholarship is Alejandra Angel.



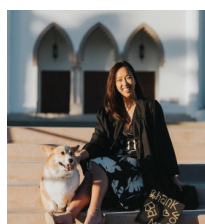
Alejandra Angel is in her last year in the MA Pastoral Theology program. She is currently a graduate assistant for the Latino/a Theology and Ministry Initiative, and serves as the Confirmation Coordinator at Mount Saint Mary's University. Her interests include: Liberation Theology, U.S. Latino/a Theology, and Día de los Muertos.

RSHM Gailhac Pastoral Leadership Scholarship

This scholarship supports graduate students pursuing an MA in pastoral theology who demonstrate pastoral leadership potential. The recipients of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary Gailhac Pastoral Leadership Scholarship are Sr. Linda Buck, CSJ and Linda Nguyen.



Sr. Linda Buck, CSJ has worked on several projects which focus on practical applications for therapists and spiritual directors. She continues to work in the areas of social justice and mental health as a teacher, clinical supervisor, and psychotherapist.



Linda Nguyen is a full time graduate student in the Theology program. Linda has also worked full-time as a Campus Minister at Mount Saint Mary's University sharing and applying the knowledge and education she has learned to young adults. Linda currently works part-time as a Resident Minister at Loyola Marymount University and full-time as a freshman theology teacher at Marymount High School.

"APOPHATIC THEOLOGY AND IRONMAN TRIATHLON"

By Eduardo G. Sanchez

How do we talk about God? (Bultmann, 1991). So much of our theological education is learning how to talk about God- Cataphatic theology. But, how much do we learn about how not to talk about God and let God be God? Arguably, Cataphatic theology focuses on God's immanence in the world while Apophatic (Negative) theology focuses on the transcendence of God. This transcendence is one that goes beyond any concept we can conceive of God. Apophatic theology has been linked with ideas as amorphous as mysticism and spirituality because an experience of God cannot be fully understood or explained. Sometimes it is viewed as allowing God to be God. My claim is that we can recuperate the importance of God's transcendence by becoming aware that "God is closer to us than we are to ourselves" (*Confessions* III.vi.11). I reflect on an experience of this transcendence in the context of an Ironman triathlon. This specific encounter is at the crossroads between the culture of sports and theology. Ironman triathlon is one of many examples in a modern culture that views sports as a religion with events like the Superbowl, World Cup Soccer, the World Series, and the Olympics, just to name a few, that evoke what many say are religious experiences both for the participants and spectators. As theologians, we should pay special attention to opportunities within our culture to share the mystery of our glorious faith in places that sometimes are "hidden in plain sight." Sports, like music and art, can be fertile ground for a secular society to become aware that boundaries of the sacred implode on the profane in profound ways that make society reflect that the boundaries between the sacred and the profane (Eliade, 1957) may not be clearly marked, as believed. Mircea Eliade calls these breakthroughs, hierophanies—a manifestation of the sacred (Eliade, 2005). Ironman triathlons are sources of hierophanies.

An Ironman triathlon involves swimming 2.4 miles, cycling 112 miles and running a 26.2-mile marathon—yes, all in one day. Why would anyone do an Ironman? The answer can be diverse, and often appears to be unsayable. As a triathlete, I find it difficult to describe what drives me to compete and to push my limits. But, I learn something new about myself in every Ironman. Triathletes often describe an Ironman event as a confrontation with themselves. A confrontational transcendence—a moment of going beyond what they thought was possible within themselves. This transcendence provides an intuition that there is something beyond the material—something immaterial to claim. For the person of faith, this experience is our notion of God (a religious experience). This experience may be God's way of speaking to the Christian, as well as the non-believer, without making us aware of it. Karl Rahner would call God's self-communication to man in a pre-cognitive and non-thematic way—the supernatural existential. It is not easy to describe this experience. The secular may not view this as an experience of God at all. The secular worldview would hold to Feuerbach's projection theory in some form or another—that if we find God in our experience, then we make God into our experience. No transcendence.



Sports have been viewed in three ways throughout history (Ellis, 2014). First, sports have been a vehicle for communion with the divine and for regulating the relationship with the divine. A second view, predominant during the post-Reformation era, sees sports as dangerous frivolous activities that take time away from the divine. Finally, the third view, one that occurred in ancient times and is more prevalent now, is that sports are a means of moral development—character building—but the activity itself does not have any intrinsic religious substance. I claim that we need to reclaim the first view and interpret that notion of the ineffable and unsayable God as communicating to us through every day experiences- such as Ironman triathlons.

What occurs during these Ironman competitions? These events create their own time and world. The world that exists within this world- our everyday world that we live. But, in a sense, is outside this world in that it is its "own self-contained" world. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls this the "flow"—a state where people are so involved in what they are doing that nothing else matters. When people are in this "flow," it is so enjoyable that they will do it for "sheer sake of doing it" without concern for cost (Ellis, 2014).

It is as if time and space do not exist—they are played in a timeless present. Finding the experience of God is inductive in that it does not rely on some divine revelation, but is found from within the mystery of being human and transcending to what we were meant to be before God. I find this experience similar to what occurs in the Catholic Mass. In Mass, Catholic believers do not just commemorate the hierophany of God incarnate in the world through Jesus, but through the ritual, enter a time and space that is eternal—one in which we are participants and not just observers. As people of faith, we are called to make present the Good News of our experience.

As theologians, we are interpreters of our culture and our faith. We must strive to keep a thorough ambiguous relationship between our culture and faith. In doing so, we acknowledge, as David Tracy states, that our positions can only be “relatively adequate” given the dialectic between faith and culture. The hermeneutical correlation between Ironman triathlons and the *Via Negativa* calls us to reclaim the phenomenon that is a transcendent God that saturates our lives, beyond our comprehension, from within so that we can be everything that we were meant to be before God.

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The Sacred-Profane dichotomy are categories used by French sociologist Emile Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912) Developed by Mircea Eliade to explain hierophanies in *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, translated by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, 1957). *Via Negativa* is the Latin term used by Thomas Aquinas in referencing Pseudo-Dionysius’ approach in his *Mystical Theology*. *Via Negativa* can be interchangeable with *Apophatic* (Greek term) and *Negative theology*.

*Courtesy of Google Images.



Eduardo G. Sanchez is in his third year in the MA Theology program. He is interested in fundamental theology and moral theology. He is a California licensed attorney and CPA practicing business, corporate, tax and estate planning.

“A Review of the Book: *Interreligious Friendship After Nostra Aetate*” By Janice Poss

In 1965, at fifteen, I strategized to become a top fashion designer. The Second Vatican Council’s documents had been published, and *Nostra Aetate* was among them. I was clueless, I cared less about anything coming out of the Vatican --especially with a Latin title having no meaning for me -- except a bejeweled embroidery that might inspire a contemporary dress or jacket. Nothing ecclesially theological was in my purview as I exerted independence from parental authority with one foot out the door as a practicing Catholic. I was disheartened by the disciplinary, androcentric, ‘Father’ God who was mean, hypercritical and presupposed that anyone practicing any religion other than Roman Catholicism was doomed forever to hell. Salvation was not for everyone.

Nostra Aetate changed all that: I was unaware of its existence and access to this document; therefore, we must remember, it was intended for a primarily male clerical audience. Today any document can be accessed on the Vatican’s website. Reading it now – if one can get past the androcentric language of fifty-one years ago – I see its value. But did the Vatican give me ‘permission’ to think pluralistically? I already knew the goodness of my friends of other faiths. My life’s rule is a hermeneutic of suspicion of all authoritarian dominance.

Foreseeing internationalism, the old-fashioned name for globalism, and a spiritual Native American influence coming out of the fashion centers of Europe, my artistic work was informed by these two concepts.

Through the art of Crow, Navajo, and Hopi, I discovered a holistic worldview -- spirit endowed all creation -- integration. Mother Earth and Father Sky worked with humanity, taking what was needed, giving back what was not. The animals and mountains breathed spirit into their cosmology becoming my interreligious lens. Through respect for nature's incarnation, I experienced a way of being which made more sense than the narrow, fearful, Roman Catholicism, one by which I was indoctrinated. Its doctrinal, myopic understanding of God and creation gnawed my gut; there had to be more than one religious reality.

Today, I understand, articulate and share that theological knowledge in the retrieval of my 'home' faith. Yes, I returned unconventionally through Buddhism to a Catholic world I did not know— post-Vatican II, more open, loving, intellectually stimulating and diverse than the one I had left over twenty years before, slightly more gender friendly, yet we know, still has a way to go, but is being actively addressed and that is hopeful. I learned my faith all over again through the priests, sisters' religious and others who became my friends, who empowered and healed my deep spiritual and psychological wounds.

So this co-edited book, *Interreligious Friendship After Nostra Aetate* is a long time in coming. Commendably, it tells the active backstory of the process of theological thinking, collaboration and relationship that begins, develops and grows over time. Whether influenced as in Francis Clooney's textual story, ideas from students, or conversing about transformation in reading Hinduism through Indian teachers; enjoying a meal together with our 'Sensei' and his 'Fujin' in their Japanese homeland as in James Fredericks' teaching parable about his encounter with Zen Buddhism through a Catholic lens; raising children, doing scholarly full-time work and wondering whether those children are getting the right message in the shared tale from Tracy Tiemeier and Mugdha Yeolekar of mixed religious backgrounds; or a back and forth between soul mates working out equal women's roles in religion, through shared encounters with Tibetan Buddhism, Judaism or a panoply of diverse Christianity in Rosemary Radford Ruether's intimating responsorial about Rita Gross; all are about acceptance of the other and an openness to

be vulnerable in the wonder of difference which awakens new aspects in oneself, we understand how these special friendships are multifarious, coming in all shapes, sizes, numbers, and reasons.

The old fear of crossing boundaries into the other's territory reminds me of three other fears being examined today in a healthier, relational, and authentic way: a). racism, b). gender-sexism, and c). homophobia. How can we not be friends in the world of

theological studies and practices across all borders? How can we not live what we preach? Are we not hypocritical if the relationships fostered through common and uncommon discussion of where our faith stands and unstands 'in the place of no place to stand' being unfaithful to our own traditions? In our unstanding, we take a stand, a stand to unstand and shake the very ground(s) of our being(s) to waiver in the uncertain certainty of our suchness, as such!

As far as we have come with these stories about the encounter with the 'other', our neighbor, the book raises even more questions as Clooney states. My concern in the articles is the silent assumption. The

writers write from their own perceptions. How can the true voice of other be heard within pleasant, memory reflections about shared time?

For example, was Mrs. Abe a part of the carefully constructed conversations between Masao and Jim? Surely, she was not silent during these special mealtimes. Tracy and Mugdha approach this idea better by their paper's shared dialogue, but the children play the silent role. What did the toddlers learn? Were they directly asked how and what they were feeling or knowing in their experience? This could help parental doubts. Rosemary expressed the back and forth technique used in their formal dialogue, but did Rita and Rosemary share outside of conference and paper presentation structures? Friendship is an exchange to know the other more intimately. Is it possible in a book of this nature? I wonder? Clooney offers us no dialogue; with no idea specifically how he was changed by his encounter other than the distance created by the Indian caste system creating another barrier and the negative response he had at studying Hinduism as a white, male Catholic priest. Have these friendships transformed the way these teachers teach?

This book demonstrates the ephemeral fragility of our relationships, the losses of Sri Ramaurthy Sastri,



Masao Abe, and Rita Gross. These losses will not be repeated. These special relationships are personal, more than personal shared in time by like-minded souls searching and questing for answers around the globe from various belief systems having in common our human condition, all having human death at their end, but each helping us along the road explaining and expanding our worldviews creating a better place in hope for all human sharing in public and in private. We are each *bodhisattvas* clothed in *Imago/Anima Dei/Dea* on the path/journey of individual sentient redemption making *Nostra Aetate* an integral part of religion's solution rather than the problem.

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Tracy and Jim were my professors during my MA in Theological Studies program at LMU. They formed and moved me to places I had never been. At a Buddhist/Christian Dialogue conference in 2005, I heard Jim speak for the first time and was mesmerized by our like-minded understanding of the alienation that globalization was having on culture at that time. I went on to study comparative theology and hermeneutics with him. Through an interreligious lens, Tracy taught me systematics. We are involved in interreligious dialogue in Los Angeles. They are my 'Sensei', and my good friends. No words needed.

*Courtesy of Google Images.



Janice Poss graduated from LMU with an MA degree in Pastoral Theology in 2012. She is an active member of Good Shepherd Parish in Beverly Hills, CA where she teaches Bible Study and sings in the choir. She is also a Ph. D. candidate at Claremont Graduate University in Women's Studies and Religion, a member of the Women's Caucus at AAR and regular blogger on women's theological issues for FAR-feminismandreligion.org.

"The Work and Faith of Victor Frankl"

By *Bronwen Jones*

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) was a Viennese psychotherapist mentored by both Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler. From 1942 until 1945, Frankl lived through the experience of four concentration camps—Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Kaufering, and Turkheim. His parents, his brother, and wife, Tilly, all perished in the camps, but he did not know this until the war was over. Frankl believed that in the horror of the concentration camps he could put his theory of psychiatry, which he called *logotherapy*, to an extraordinary test as he observed humanity enduring the worst nightmares and witnessed the breadth of human resilience. He writes of extraordinary efforts of human kindness in an insufferable and horrific life.

Frankl formalized his logotherapy based on existential analysis. Existential analysis can be defined as a phenomenological and person-oriented psychotherapy, with the aim of leading the person to a mental and emotional freedom of experience, to authentic decisions, and to a responsible way of dealing with life. In addition to existential analysis, logotherapy uses psychological tools, such as gratitude and reframing one's perspective in a challenging situation, in order to bring hope and meaning back into the life of someone suffering from hopelessness. It is a cognitive therapy, and defines three ways to make meaning in one's life: 1) through work and creativity, 2) through relationships and love, and 3) through being faced with an unchangeable fate, such as incurable cancer. In practice, the simplest explanation Frankl provides of the application of logotherapy is the space between stimulus and response. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. Frankl always presented logotherapy to the world with a secular voice, and many people who admire Frankl assume he was not religious.

Frankl was raised in a religiously Jewish household. During his teen years he went through a period of atheism. But during his adult life he practiced two significant daily religious rituals. The onset of his daily prayer practice had a marked beginning. At the very end of the war, the day the Germans were marching the prisoners out of the camps to other

places so that they could destroy the evidence of the camps, he noticed that a prisoner had smuggled a set of tefillin (Tefillin are small black boxes containing verses from the Torah used in Jewish daily prayer). He watched the man put on the tefillin and pray. Afterwards he asked the man if he could borrow it. He had an overwhelming urge to put it on even though the last time he had worn tefillin and prayed was at his Bar Mitzvah at thirteen years of age. He was unable to remember any of the appropriate Jewish prayers and so he prayed the *Kaddish* – a prayer that he often repeated to himself, that praises God and celebrates life in the presence of death. For the rest of his life, he started each day wearing tefillin and reciting the *Kaddish*. In addition, every evening Frankl would select a Psalm, underline what he considered the most important phrase, and pray.

Rabbi Reuven Bulka, a psychologist and practitioner of logotherapy, worked with Frankl. When I asked Rabbi Bulka what his understanding was of Viktor Frankl's theology, he replied, "Not sure he has a theology. He has strong beliefs and principles that have theological implications." Logotherapy is deeply influenced by Frankl's personal faith that is rooted in Judaism. It is from this perspective that he interacts and engages with scholars and theologians from other faith traditions and intellects of the secular world.

For Frankl, God is a taskmaster. To look to God is a way to be outside of oneself, to be beyond oneself, to find freedom. It is the God of Moses, of Abraham, of Job and Solomon of the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament. Frankl never quotes from the New Testament. Believing in God is one way to aspire to be the best you can be as a human being. In this way, God inspires meaning by expecting something from you, rather than you expecting something from God. Frankl easily translates this relationship to those who do not believe in God, thereby providing therapeutic value independent of religion.

When looking at the body of religious texts to which Frankl constantly refers, it is curious that he is considered secular at all. The texts are all from the Jewish tradition. Some texts cross over into the Christian tradition as well. But he does not refer to "Hear, oh Israel, the Lord our God is One" as Deuteronomy 6:4, but rather calls it the *Shema Israel*. To recite the *Shema Israel* is to look beyond oneself. It is a *logotherapeutic* tool to employ in the face of suffering. Ultimately he believes that a human being has

meaning in life if he aims to die with the "*Shema Israel* on his lips" whether it be on the way to the gas chambers, dying of cancer, or gracefully from old age. Frankl often quoted the scientist Albert Einstein with the following words: "Science without religion is lame – religion without science is blind." Viktor Frankl found meaning and purpose through his sense of responsibility to bring logotherapy to as many people as possible. This is probably why he did not often publicly discuss his Judaism. It was his *Tikkun Olam*, his effort to repair the world, which in turn gave him meaning and purpose.



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- *Courtesy of Google Images.

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"The Visionary Hildegard of Bingen" (1098-1179)

By Karin Nuernberg, CSJ

Visionary, prophet, prolific writer, and composer – these words describe Hildegard of Bingen; a woman of reform, yet embracing traditional monasticism; chronically, and at times seriously ill, yet possessing seemingly boundless energy; a woman who referred to her inferior status as a woman, yet challenged abbots, emperors and even the pope; an abbess for whom the Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharist were a source of life, but who, in fighting for what she believed in, exposed her monastery to a six-month interdict. In this essay, some of these contradictions will be explored in conjunction with Hildegard's role as a visionary.

Illness, visions, and prophecy are closely connected in Hildegard's life. At age forty-two she received her prophetic call, which manifested itself in the form of light flowing into her heart and brain, infusing her with knowledge of Scripture. Over the course of her life Hildegard would experience bouts of illness, especially when she did not heed God's message. Such was the case when due to initial doubt and humility Hildegard did not record her visions or later when she was reluctant to communicate some visions. Unbeknownst to others, Hildegard experienced her first visions in childhood, yet only in her forties did she come to understand them as a means of God's revelation. Since already her childhood visions were accompanied with illness some scholars, notably Charles Singer, attribute Hildegard's visions to migraines.

Hildegard's illness kept her grounded and aware of her frailty amidst her prophetic visions. Yet Hildegard also used illness to her advantage. When Abbot Cuno refused to grant Hildegard and her nuns permission to relocate in order to found an independent monastery – as Benedictines they had vowed stability – Hildegard became ill. From her sickbed she declared that she heard a loud voice forbidding her to further convey or write down her visions.



When Archbishop Henry of Mainz ordered Abbot Cuno to let the women go, Hildegard became well again and continued to dictate her visions.

Unlike later mystics Hildegard did not induce visions or other paranormal experiences. In the Declaration of *Scivias*, Hildegard's first and most famous work, Hildegard clarifies that she receives her visions while wide-awake and not in a trance; neither does she hear voices. Insofar as physical experience is involved, it is in the form of light and pain. Hildegard furthermore differs from other mystics in that her visions are not about union with God, for which reason Carolyn Walker Bynum (1990, 3) and Barbara J. Newman (1990, 17) do not count her as a mystic. Hildegard's visions are less individualistic and Hildegard does not dictate much about herself. Instead her

visions are ecclesiological and historical, "one realizes one has been shown the structure of salvation. With Hildegard one does not feel; one sees" (Walker Bynum 1990, 5). Hildegard did not resort to extreme forms of asceticism, nor did she have miraculous lactations or stigmata, as did female mystics of the thirteenth century.

Nevertheless, Bynum qualifies Hildegard's experience as

profoundly female. Like Mary of Oignies, Angela of Foligno, and Catherine of Genoa, Hildegard's work is full of references to the body, a body that is at the same time glorious and shameful. Hildegard believes that virginity gives women power and independence, exempting them from female subordination.

Despite the many references to body and gender, Hildegard's primary concern in *Scivias* is human salvation. Thus, her visions relate to creation, incarnation, the last judgment, and final redemption. Her own role is that of a biblical prophet reluctantly accepting a mission from God. Because the priests, whose duty it was to teach, preach, and interpret Scripture, had become "lukewarm and sluggish in serving God's justice" (*Scivias* I.1), Hildegard is called to fulfill this role. Through the visions she, who by her own classification was uneducated, "immediately" understood the meaning of Scripture.

While Hildegard's claim of being uneducated serves to lend her visions divine authority, she knows that in a world of male hierarchy she also needs the approval of an influential male figure. Thus, she writes to Bernard of Clairvaux, a charismatic and influential Cistercian. Bernard believes that Hildegard's visions

are authentic, thereby setting in motion a chain of endorsements all the way to Pope Eugenius III, himself a Cistercian and former disciple of Bernard. During his stay in nearby Trier for a synod, Eugenius obtained a copy of her unfinished work, publically endorsed it, urging Hildegard to continue. This protected Hildegard against censure due to violating the pseudo-Pauline tradition prohibiting women from teaching (1 Tim 2:11-12). The visions in turn gave her a prophetic authority and the content for her teachings.

Hildegard understands her revelations as intended for exegesis, not experience. Her images - for instance precious stones and garments - are taken from the Old Testament. Thus, there is a difference to both spousal imagery as encountered with Bernard, and the gentle language of 14th century Rhineland convents, which centered on the human experience of Jesus.

While her visions have political content, Hildegard does not promote radical change. She does not want to abolish hierarchies in the church or society; rather, she is opposed to the abuse of power, particularly among clerics. An advocate of the Gregorian reforms, Hildegard supports clerical celibacy while condemning simony and subservience of religious power to secular power. Order and harmony are important and, as Newman (1990, 21) points out, the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of order do not exclude each other. Thus, Hildegard finds herself opposed to her former supporter Emperor Barbarossa when he appoints another antipope in 1168.

Finally, amongst many roles, Hildegard remains a Benedictine abbess. As such, harmony, obedience, and *ordo* are vital for the daily life. Coming from an aristocratic family, she sees no contradiction between monasticism and elitism, but rather uses her connections to benefit her community. Hildegard furthermore defends the fact that her abbey only accepts women of nobility. She thereby represents traditional monasticism opposed to emerging waves of radical reformers such as Richard of Springiersbach. In doing so, Hildegard embraces the Benedictine middle ground between extremes. Her visions likewise reflect monastic themes. Vision I.1 in *Scivias*, for example, recounts fear of the Lord and poverty of Spirit. In the *Rule of St. Benedict*, the first

step on the ladder of humility is the fear of God, which man keeps “always before his eyes” (RB 7.10.). Hildegard picks up this theme in her very first vision by depicting the Fear of the Lord as an image full of eyes, standing at the foot of a mountain.

This essay intended to show the complexity of Hildegard and the tension of opposites that shape her life and works. Opposites that stand side by side - and which prevent the reader from drawing conclusions too quickly. In one sense, Hildegard defies classification, as the discussion on whether or not Hildegard is to be counted among the mystics shows. Likewise, the many genres of her works, which could not all be elaborated here, are an indication of the wide-ranging influence Hildegard exerts. In another sense, Hildegard is a systematician par excellence. Lest the reader be fooled by the titles “visionary”, “mystic”, and “prophet” attributed to Hildegard, *Scivias* is also a work of systematic theology. In juxtaposing the table of contents of Hugh of St. Victor’s summa with that of *Scivias*, scholars have noted the similarity in content, though the methods differ. Thus, as Newman surmises: “If Hildegard had been a male theologian, her *Scivias* would undoubtedly have been considered one of the most important early medieval summas” (Newman 1990, 23).



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* Courtesy of Google Images



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“ALMA BACKYARD FARMS A PASTORAL MINISTRY OF HEALING ” *By Richard Garcia*

Our shared vocation to heal this broken world with mercy and compassion has been made clear by Pope Francis. In Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*, it is put forth that we share in a responsibility to shape and sustain our world as stewards of God's creation. As Francis puts it, "Jesus worked with his hands, in daily contact with the matter created by God, to which he gave form by his craftsmanship...In this way he sanctified human labour and endowed it with a special significance for our development." In this spirit of environmental stewardship, Alma Backyard Farms participates in the sanctified labor of growing food and empowering the disenfranchised.

Alma Backyard Farms accompanies the formerly incarcerated as they journey through the wilderness of urban life post-incarceration.

Rooted in restorative justice and environmental stewardship, Alma Backyard Farms started in 2013 as a way to reclaim lives, repurpose land and reimagine community. The women and men who work at Alma Backyard Farms have committed themselves to giving back as part of their effort to return home. Through urban farming, participants have the chance to attain

gainful employment, become self-sufficient and reconnect their lives back into the fabric of society. Alma Backyard Farms proposes real solutions to the challenges of California's overcrowded prisons and food injustice in low-income neighborhoods.

Recognizing that no lives or land are to be wasted, Alma Backyard Farms creates opportunities for the previously incarcerated to become agents of health, safety, and community, increasing access to nutritious options in food deserts. In this way, urban farming helps everyone involved explore the relationships between plants, animals, and humans as a way to create a profound connection to both nature and their community.

Alma Backyard Farms offers three programs to empower women and men who were previously incarcerated:

Urban Farmer Training:

The Urban Farmer Training Program offers project-based education for participants to develop skills in horticulture. In learning about the relationship between urban farming and ecology, participants learn to build systems that improve the environment.

Food Sharing:

The Food Sharing Program distributes its harvest of fresh vegetables with partners and agencies that transform the food into healthy meals for families in need.

Horticultural Therapy:

The Horticultural Therapy Program explores the potential of each individual and accompanies participants in their struggle for change and growth.

Alma Backyard Farms was inspired by the voices and ideas shared by juvenile offenders and prisoners eager to transform their lives by "giving back" to the communities they "took from" – and were taken away from. For most people experiencing incarceration, there are few opportunities to interact with nature and nurture others. Alma Backyard Farms creates multiple opportunities for women and men who were incarcerated to give back to the health and safety of communities by growing food for these communities.

In the spirit of food justice, Alma Backyard Farms grows food in historically disenfranchised neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles. These neighborhoods are often food deserts, where healthy and nutritious foods are difficult to find. Food insecurity has reached crisis proportions in LA County, with the potential to have significant negative impacts on health and well-being across the life span, including impairing growth and development among children, increasing risks for depression and other mental health conditions among adolescents and contributing to malnutrition and worsened medical conditions in the elderly. Having access to nutritious, affordable and quality

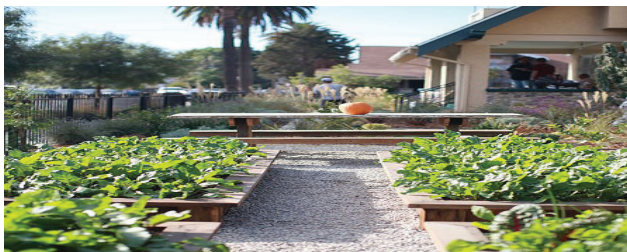
food is essential to the well-being of individuals and the communities in which they live.

Through its urban farming model, Alma Backyard Farms is committed to making healthy and nutritious food available to lower-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles with majority Latino and African-American populations. One example of this is Alma's operations in Compton, CA, where the organization is scaling up its urban farming as part of its fight against food insecurity. In partnership with St. Albert the Great Parish in Compton, Alma Backyard Farms is creating opportunities for members of the Compton community to learn innovative farming methods and skills so they can build a future of food security. The new 1/4 acre urban farm is set to be in operation in 2017 and will be a space for growing food and a venue for strengthening the community.

The organization grows local, organic and sustainable food in re-purposed land throughout Los Angeles utilizing high-yield raised bed methods. A portion of its harvest is shared with partners and agencies that prepare the food into healthy meals for families in need, and a portion is sold to restaurants with seasonal menus. Alma Backyard Farms also provides raised bed garden installations for individuals and families interested in growing their own food.

With its expertise, Alma Backyard Farms helps communities develop their edible landscape while generating revenue for the organization to continue its services for high-risk youth and the formerly incarcerated. Over the last two years, they've provided employment opportunities to 20+ people, who have graduated with skills in urban farming and professionalism.

In *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson describes the paradox that "[o]ur shared vulnerability and imperfection nurtures and sustains our capacity for compassion." The work that I am privileged to be a part of continues to thrive in geographical locations of rising food insecurity and continues to empower populations who many would consider undeserving. It is, however, in these areas of apparent weakness that the pastoral work of Alma Backyard Farms appears to be at its strongest.



Front image of Alma Backyard Farms.



Richard Garcia's passion to grow food comes from a long-line of Filipino farmers. A Los Angeles native, Richard lives to see that no life or land is wasted in the City of Angels. Richard studied at St. John's Seminary College and has extensive experience in pastoral ministry inside juvenile halls and prisons. As a pastoral minister, youth advocate, and urban farmer, Richard knows how growing food is a transformative way of bringing people together. Since completing an MA degree in Pastoral Theology at Loyola Marymount University, Richard incorporates principals of restorative justice into urban farming. As a skilled craftsman, Richard builds innovative structures that encourage outdoor living.

"MEDIATED KNOWLEDGE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD"

By Josh Shrader-Perry

According to the Christian story, it is of immense importance for individual human beings to be in reciprocal relationship with God; in fact, this may be what the Christian life is all about. Despite the importance of having a reciprocal relationship with God, such relationships are often not described in any particularly concrete way. Some might suggest that the reason for this lack of explanation is because true reciprocal relationship with God involves subjective personal experiences of the Divine. And perhaps it is natural to think that these subjective personal experiences are incommunicable (or, at the very least, very difficult to communicate by way of concrete explanation). By subjective personal experiences of the Divine, I mean those experiences that are only available to the individuals who have them, for instance, the experiences of Christian mystics or auditory experiences of the Divine – i.e., hearing God's voice. These experiences are different than experiences stemming from widely accessible media such as stories told orally, shown through film, or expressed through the written word.

Here I will briefly argue that reciprocal relationship with God does not require subjective personal experiences of the Divine. Instead, I will show that a

reciprocal relationship with God can be achieved through the mediated knowledge of the Divine received through the biblical narratives, which I understand to be widely available and therefore not subjective and personal in the sense described above (although it may certainly be possible for one to have a subjective personal encounter with the Divine via the biblical narratives). In a sense to be explained below, the biblical narratives describing the encounters of other people with God – the Gospels, the Exodus story of God rescuing the Israelites from Egypt, etc. – can “stand in” for one’s own encounter with the Divine.

To see how, we need to attend to a distinction between propositional knowledge, called “knowledge that” by Eleonore Stump, and non-propositional experiential knowledge. I suggest that there is a difference between knowing information about a person, for instance, and experiencing what said person is like. This distinction will enable us to see how experiential knowledge can, unlike propositional knowledge, be mediated through “second-person” experiences. Then, I will show that biblical narratives can provide us with second-person experiences that can mediate knowledge of God in a way that is sufficient for reciprocal relationship with the Divine.

Propositional Versus Experiential Knowledge

There seems to be a difference between propositional knowledge, understood as facts or arguments making definitive statements about the world, and experiential knowledge of the world. Stump uses the example of the relationship between an infant and her mother. The infant does not have the mental capabilities to know that her mother is her caretaker; in other words, the infant is not able to understand the proposition that the person caring for her is indeed her mother. Yet, according to Stump, the infant “can know her mother, and to one extent or another she can also know some of her mother’s mental states.” (Stump, 2010, 66) In the same vein, Stump explains how autistic children are able to know propositional information about other people, such as: this woman is my mother – but have an inability to understand the mental states of others, which many psychologists call “social cognition” or “mindreading;” this is a prime example of experiential knowledge, and one to which I will return in the next section (Stump, 2010). Michael Rea provides us with a different example, appealing to a somewhat famous philosophical example. He asserts that if a person were to know everything that there is to know about the color red without ever having seen the color red, upon coming into contact with a red rose she would still learn something about the red rose,

namely “*what it is like to experience redness*” (Rea, 2009, 89).

Philosopher Paul Moser agrees with this assertion that there is a difference between propositional and experiential knowledge. He argues in his context concerning the problem of Divine hiddenness that in coming into knowledge of the existence of God, God would provide people not with propositional knowledge of God’s self, but with experiential knowledge. God, according to Moser, would not provide “spectator evidence” of God’s existence; instead the kind of knowledge that God would provide would be the kind of knowledge that causes one to be transformed closer into the image of God – i.e., experiential knowledge of God.

Mediated, Experiential Knowledge of God

Having established that there is a distinction between propositional knowledge and experiential knowledge, I will now show that experiential knowledge of God can be passed on to others via the biblical narratives. Stump suggests that the primary way in which experiential knowledge of other persons is communicated through the mirror neuron structure of the human brain. Mirror neurons are neurons which, upon observation of another person, help the observer to understand the “intentions and emotions” of the other person (Stump, 2010). When observing another person, or when imagining a scenario or person performing some action, these mirror neurons fire off in the observer’s brain in a similar way that they would if the observer were herself performing the action or feeling the emotion. Mirror neurons, therefore, give us an interpersonal “form of direct experiential understanding” (Stump, 2010, 69).

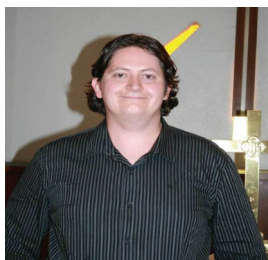
Stump explains that this experience is akin to a type of experience lying part way between first-person and third-person experience— what she calls “second-person experience.” (Stump, 2010, 75). Second-person experiences are direct experiences of another person. These second-person experiences can be passed on to others through narrative. Stump explains: “In a first-person account, I give a report about some first-person experience of mine. In a third-person account, I give a report about some feature or condition of someone else,” but second-person accounts are not expressible through propositional accounts. Narratives, Stump and Rea explain, are able to carry on this second-person experience in a way that first and third-person accounts are unable to do. Narratives, according to Stump, enable one to “re-present the experience itself in such a way that we can share the second-person experience to some degree with others who were not a part of it” (Stump, 2010, 78).

Narratives provide the reader, or hearer, with the cognitive resources to stand in the place of the author who had the described experience. Rea explains that if this account of second-person experiences is correct then it is possible that the biblical narratives are able to pass on experiential knowledge of the Divine to hearers and readers (Rea, 2009, 91).

In this short essay, I have given an account of how one can be in reciprocal relationship with God via God's mediated presence in the biblical narratives. The biblical narratives are able to pass on second-person experiences of God to twenty-first century readers in a way that is similar to when one hears the stories of an aunt one has never met and then, upon meeting this aunt, realizes that in some sense one already knew her, not just information about her. Another example might be reading a particularly good book of fiction; by the time the reader has finished, she has in some sense begun to know the characters in the book. Biblical narratives provide the represented cognitive world and situation which allows the reader to stand in the place of the one having the second-person experience of the Divine. It is in this way that the biblical narratives are able to express to human beings not just propositions about God, but experiential knowledge of who God is. This experiential knowledge of God provides one with the kind of knowledge necessary to be in relationship with God. One does not just know about God, but is able to come to know God through the mediated experiential knowledge of the Divine found in and through the biblical narratives.

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Josh Shrader-Perry is finishing his second year in the MA in Theology at Loyola Marymount University. His main academic interest is philosophical theology, especially questions pertaining to religious epistemology and the problem of evil. In addition

to his studies he is also the Director of Missions and Discipleship at Placentia United Methodist Church in Placentia, CA.

“DIGNITY AND THE COMMON GOOD: RESTORING LITURGICAL IDENTITY”

***By Nicholas Denysenko, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of Theological Studies***

What is Christian identity? In this short essay, I present texts from the Orthodox Divine Liturgy to see how one's participation in the Eucharist communicates identity. I will then reflect on how a fundamental liturgical identity might contribute to the process of re-creating Christian identity to honor human dignity and energize Christ's body to do good for the life of the world.

Identity Formation in the Divine Liturgy

I am using the anaphora of St. John Chrysostom, as the one most frequently prayed in the Byzantine rite. The most important aspect of this anaphora is its theocentric themes: from the beginning through the end, the entire attention of the community is directed towards divine activity. The prayer essentially states that the people have done nothing, and all praise is due to God, and God alone. The anaphora reveals the liturgical participant to be doxological: one who praises God for everything God has done, whether known or unknown. The opening lines of the anaphora establish this quality permeating the entirety of the Eucharistic prayer: "It is proper and right to hymn You, to bless You, to praise You, to give thanks to You, and to worship You in every place of Your dominion." References to the most salient acts of God's divine saving activity follow the pattern established by the opening lines. The human confession of unworthiness is not a denigration of human dignity: it rather attributes the recreation of human dignity to God's saving activity.

In terms of identity, I suggest that it is more insightful to identify repetition within the ritual celebration than it is to exegete the Christological excerpts from our texts. The ritual and text continue to refer to

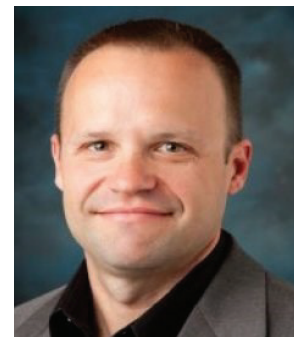
the same central theme of theo-centric doxology in the prayer. The anaphora appoints the people to sing doxological hymns: they sing “it is proper and right”, which precedes the anaphoral text of the presider who states, “it is proper and right to hymn you, to praise you, to bless you.” In the next section, the people sing the Trisagion hymn of the anaphora, which introduces the anaphoral text, in which the presider says, “we exclaim and say, holy are you and most holy.” Finally, in the penultimate ritual act of the anaphora, the people sing “we praise, bless, and give thanks,” which introduces a new series of people’s activities: the people beseech, pray, and entreat God to send the Spirit. The theo-centrism of the prayer is so prominent that it limits the liturgical participant to a set of activities attributing all of salvation to God alone: the primary tasks of the liturgical participants are to pray, bless, and thank God; the thanksgiving leads the liturgical participant to offer and entreat, with the expectation that God will act again. God’s activity is transformative: God sends the Holy Spirit “upon us,” and the result of God’s transformation of the “gifts here presented” is for “us” to become “partakers” and communicants who are “full of the kingdom of heaven.” Thus, during the course of the anaphora the liturgical participant is a “doxological being,” one whose task is to thank, bless, and praise God for everything. God’s response is to give a gift to the community, and the liturgical participants become partakers of God who are full of the kingdom of heaven. The primary theme taken from the liturgy is humanity’s obligation to thank, praise, and bless God for recreating humankind into people who bear God’s word and share it for the life of the world. Humanity praises God for God’s respect for the dignity of each human person.

From Idealism to Reality

The identities we have presented so far presume that the ritual actions and proclamations of text have a direct relationship in forming the identity of the participants. But we can no longer take such assumptions for granted. The liturgy we have presented is ideal: it assumes that the assembly has gathered on time, that the lectors, deacons, and presbyters have proclaimed the word of God clearly and dispassionately, that the anaphora has been prayed aloud and in a fashion that all can hear and follow without distraction, and that the people have all received Holy Communion. In addition to the improbability of liturgical excellence, we should add the final competing feature: the presence of alternative identities in our liturgical gatherings.

Parish communities have dozens of rituals that form identity among the participants, and many of these rituals occur outside of the liturgy. Furthermore, these non-liturgical rituals are quite meaningful to participants. We must also consider the complexity of the dynamics at play when a variety of modes of participation in the life of a community contribute to one’s transformation. The fellowship one enjoys with others in a dance group, Bible study, and mission to the poor and homeless might contribute to one’s identity together with liturgical participation.

Theologians must engage a serious discussion about the practical implications of adopting a liturgical identity. It is tempting to dismiss the legitimacy of engaging in secular activities. In this approach, excluding all non-ecclesial activities will leave the liturgical identity as the only remaining option for a faithful participant. My own research in ritual studies shows that people will always negotiate multiple identities. The task of the contemporary theologian is to demonstrate how the liturgical identity forms and shapes the rest of ordinary life and the identities that result from all personal allegiances and associations. To explain it simply: instructing people to abandon all other identities and embrace only the liturgical is both unrealistic and potentially damaging to identity. A preferable approach is to encourage people to think about the implications of being ‘word-bearers’, doxological beings, heaven bearers, fellows of God, and ‘temples of the Holy Spirit’ as they engage the activities associated with their other identities. A dismissal of non-liturgical identities is a dismissal of the world: the prayer that concludes the Orthodox Divine Liturgy asks God to “grant peace to your world, your churches, the clergy...” So the world is not dismissed, but is the primary communion of concern, and thus the primary arena of priestly work for the people. Theologians and pastors need to think creatively about how to manifest and activate their liturgical activities as word-bearers, fellows of God, and temples of the Spirit in dialogue with the world, so that liturgical participants would view themselves as God’s partners working together for the common good of the world. If the Church embraces this task faithfully, it is possible that many in the world will come to know the divine grace we are given at every Divine Liturgy and might be inspired to become God’s partners in working for the common good— may it be so.



Nicholas Denysenko is Associate Professor of Theological Studies and an ordained deacon of the Orthodox Church. He is currently developing a monograph on the laity's liturgical theology titled "*The People's Faith: The Liturgy of the Faithful in Orthodoxy*."

"The (Un)touchables: Four Paradigms of Moral Vulnerability and Why They Matter"

*By Matthew Petrusek, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor of Theological Studies*

The concept of "moral injury" implies that the human good is vulnerable to harm, a vulnerability that includes but is not limited to the vulnerability of the body. Yet what is the nature of this vulnerability and in what ways is the good vulnerable? Without diminishing the value of individual and contextual responses to this question (for example, personal accounts of moral vulnerability to abuse, discrimination, the experience of military combat, etc.), it appears that there are four general, mutually exclusive philosophical-religious paradigms that provide the conceptual foundation for any substantive definition of moral vulnerability we might give. I've given the paradigms the following names, each based on a particular interpretation of an author or tradition that upholds this particular view of vulnerability: 1) The Socratic Paradigm, 2) The Calvinistic Paradigm, 3) The Rousseauian Paradigm, and 4) The Humanist/Catholic Paradigm.

This is a long-term project, but the basic argument proceeds in four steps. The first is to define moral vulnerability itself. Notwithstanding the diverse definitions we could give to the term, we can say that, whatever else it might mean, moral vulnerability implies that the highest human good, however that good might specifically be defined, can be diminished (harmed) or increased (enhanced). Although moral vulnerability defined in this way can recognize potential harm coming from *any* source (e.g., a disease, accident, natural disaster), the focus, given its emphasis on vulnerability in a *moral* sense—that is, vulnerability as it relates to conceptions of good and evil—is on human action, defined as both what we do and what we fail to do. In short, moral vulnerability affirms that human action can either harm or help the pursuit and/or enjoyment of the individual's highest good.

Second, we can additionally specify that there are two kinds of moral vulnerability: 1) personal vulnerability and 2) inter-personal vulnerability. Personal vulnerability is the vulnerability of the good to an individual's own action, which includes both actions one performs *on oneself* (e.g., taking drugs) and actions one performs *in relation* to others (e.g., lying). Inter-personal vulnerability, on the other hand, is the vulnerability of the good to the *actions of others*, which includes both action directly committed by other individuals (e.g., torture, assault, robbery, etc.) and actions carried out by, or instantiated in, governments, institutions, economies, cultures, and the like (e.g., racism, sexism, exploitation, etc.).

Relatedly, it is important to distinguish moral vulnerability from moral *invulnerability*. Moral vulnerability, as noted above, affirms that the attainment and/or enjoyment of the human good is personally vulnerable, inter-personally vulnerable, or both. Moral invulnerability, in contrast, affirms that the same good is personally *invulnerable*, inter-personally *invulnerable*, or both. These definitions provide the groundwork for the four paradigms of moral (in)vulnerability, which I define below. These paradigms are both exhaustive, meaning they exhaust all definitional possibilities, and mutually exclusive, meaning that any substantive definition of vulnerability can only fit into *one* of the categories. I thus want to claim that the human good can be *either*:

- 1) personally vulnerable and inter-personally invulnerable, or
- 2) personally invulnerable and inter-personally invulnerable, or
- 3) personally invulnerable and inter-personally vulnerable, or
- 4) personally vulnerable and inter-personally vulnerable

The first category affirms that the highest human good is vulnerable to an individual's own action, but not to the actions of others. The second category affirms that the highest human good is invulnerable to one's own action and the actions of others. The third category affirms that the highest human good is invulnerable to one's own action, but vulnerable to the actions of others. And the last category affirms that the highest human good is vulnerable to both one's own action and the actions of others.

These may sound like abstract categories, but they actually correspond with four specific philosophical and theological traditions of moral reasoning. This list, it is important to note, is representative; there are other traditions of moral reasoning that could fit within these categories I've chose the following four

traditions because they exemplify the characteristics of each category.

My contention, then, is that all forms of moral harm fall into one of the following four categories:

1) The Socratic Paradigm: the human good is personally vulnerable, but inter-personally invulnerable. In other words, the attainment and/or maintenance of the good *only* depend on the individual's own actions.

a. Socrates's argument in *Apology*, especially his claim, "a good man cannot be harmed either in life or death," represents this category. Other representative examples exist in the writings of the Stoic philosopher, Epictetus, and the early Christian writer, St. John Chrysostom.

2) The Calvinist Paradigm: the human good is both personally and inter-personally invulnerable. In other words, neither an individual's own actions nor those actions performed on an individual by others have any effect on the individual's attainment and/or maintenance of the good.

a. Calvin's sustained argument in the *Institutes* supporting the view that, because of human depravity, individuals effectively have *no freedom* to participate in their own salvation—which constitutes the highest good for him—represents this category. Because of Calvin's particular interpretation of sin and God's sovereignty, nothing the human does, or is done to the human, can have any effect on the individual's salvation. The highest good is thus both personally and inter-personally invulnerable.

3) The Rousseauian Paradigm: the human good is inter-personally vulnerable, but personally invulnerable. In other words, the attainment and/or maintenance of the good *only* depend on the actions of others, not on one's own.

a. Jean Jacques Rousseau's argument in *The Social Contract*, captured in the claim, "[the individual's] life is no longer a mere bounty of nature but a gift made conditionally by the state," represents this category. The basic idea is that the individual's highest good is achievable *only if* there is the "right" kind of social order in place. Depending on the specific interpretation, Aristotle's conception of moral vulnerability could also fall into this category action.

4) The Humanist/Catholic Paradigm: the human good is both personally and inter-personally vulnerable. In other words, the attainment and/or maintenance of the good depend on *both* the individual's actions *and* the actions of others.

a. Tzvetan Todorov's account of Humanism in *Imperfect Garden: The Legacy of Humanism* as entailing both individual moral autonomy and social interdependence represents this category. A similar conception also exists in the Catholic Social Thought Tradition, especially in *Gaudium et Spes* and the encyclicals of Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict, and Pope Francis.

In grid format, the paradigms take the following form. Note that each paradigm appears in two categories because each takes a position in relation to *both* the question of whether the good is vulnerable or not *and* whether the good is personally vulnerable, inter-personally vulnerable, or both:

	Personal	Inter-Personal
Vulnerable	Socratic; Humanist/ Catholic	Rousseauian; Humanist/ Catholic
Invulnerable	Rousseauian; Calvinist	Socratic; Calvinist

Note that the Humanist/Catholic paradigm only appears on the top row because it is the only paradigm that recognizes the good as both personally and inter-personally vulnerable. The Calvinist paradigm, in contrast, only appears on the bottom row because it is the only paradigm that recognizes the good as both personally and inter-personally *invulnerable*. The Socratic and Rousseauian paradigms appear on both rows because they divide their conceptions of vulnerability between personal and inter-personal vulnerability.

The upshot of this descriptive work is ultimately to come to a normative conclusion on which of the above paradigms provides the most adequate understanding of moral vulnerability. While, like every other claim here, there needs to be much more explanation, I believe that options one and two problematically produce a conception of morality that does not sufficiently recognize the ways in the human good is vulnerable to both an individual's own actions and the actions of others. In addition to undermining the validity of human rights (it is not clear why humans would need "rights" if the good is invulnerable to human action), such views also ignore the many ways in which oppressive socio-historical conditions can thwart individual flourishing.

Option three, on the other hand, provides the conceptual grounds for recognizing and addressing the numerous ways in which the human good is vulnerable to the actions of others, both individually and instantiated in institutions and cultures. However, in effectively denying that *individuals* can have any effect on the attainment or enjoyment of their *own* highest good, this category problematically reduces the moral integrity of individuals to being a product of their historical-social

circumstances: *if* there are the “right” circumstances in place, then individuals will be able to attain their highest good; if there are the “wrong” circumstances in place, however, this category, by definition, must conclude that no human can achieve her/his highest good no matter what she or he does or does not do. The good, in other words, is entirely out of an individual’s own hands.

The fourth option, I believe, thus emerges as the most morally adequate because it both recognizes that inter-personal action can harm or help individuals to pursue and enjoy their highest good (inter-personal vulnerability), while also recognizing that an individual’s own action can also do the same. In short, it is best to be able to claim, I believe, that the attainment and possession of the good is not entirely in our own hands as individuals—but not entirely in the hands of others, either.

There’s much more to say and a need to say it more carefully, but the basic point, in the end, is this: however we might define the highest good, we have to recognize a) that we have no choice but to define that good as either vulnerable or invulnerable to human action; and b) that we also have no choice but to define that (in)vulnerability as personal, inter-personal, or both. And whatever option we end up choosing has profound ethical implications.

You can, in the end, only tell yourself *one* of the following things:

- 1) You can hurt yourself, but you can’t hurt others, at least without their consent.
- 2) No one can hurt you.
- 3) Others can hurt you, but you can’t hurt yourself (because “you” are a creation of “they”)
- 4) You can hurt others and you can hurt yourself.

These appear to be the only options on how to think about moral vulnerability. We should be careful which one we choose to adopt.



Matthew Petrussek is Assistant Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University. He is currently on sabbatical working on completing articles on human dignity in the Catholic social thought tradition and the theology of Pope Francis.”

“The Outlaw David Ben Jesse”

**By Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, Ph.D.,
Professor of Theological Studies**

Beloved Grad Students and Graduates. This is my last semester as Director of the Graduate Programs in the Department of Theological Studies – so in appreciation for all the wonderful conversations I have had with so many of you – I thought I’d leave you with a shortened “preview” of a new project I am working on – dealing with David. That’s KING David...and I know you are surprised because so many of you know that he is NOT my favorite person in the Bible. Read on...!

Confessions and Prologue: On Studying David

Why study David? In his 2009 work on David, John Van Seters begins with a statement that he has been fascinated with David since his seminary years in the early 1960s (Van Seters, 2009, xi). McKenzie’s monograph on David begins with a paean to Michelangelo’s statue, and an assessment of the attention the Bible gives to David, noting with many others that the Bible “devotes more space to David than any other character” (McKenzie, 2000, 2). Halpern, apparently recognizing that much interest in David has been traditionally driven by Christian theology, begins by acknowledging that a great deal of the Jesus tradition works to establish Jesus’ genealogical connections to David in order to buttress the claims of Messiahship assigned to Jesus, which David plays in the Christian tradition about the identity of Jesus (Halpern, 2001, 3). I confess that, at least until the current project if, I were to begin a book on David, I would have to begin with an honest expression of loathing. It is virtually impossible for me to separate the historical materials *about* David with the uses to which his story has been put over the centuries, particularly defending some of the most reprehensible behavior on the part of Christians in power that can be imagined, all in the name of Davidic “law and order”, Davidic “dominance”, and Davidic “Empire”. Furthermore, although I acknowledge that a considerable amount of the Old Testament is given over to what Walter Brueggemann has called “establishment Theology” (that is, the ideological foundations of the central Davidic line), I have a particular distaste for precisely this theology in its various forms, including the already brutal ideologies identified as “Zion Theology” by a previous generation of Old Testament scholars, a theology that spoke frequently of the foreign nations being defeated and “licking the dust” on the feet of the ancient Israelites. Nasty business.

So, why am I now writing on David – and in fact, with some enthusiasm? Because I am paying attention to the fact that many scholars of 1 and 2 Samuel suggest that there are two different sets of stories about David in these materials – a story of David's "rise" to the monarchy – and the story of the King David and his successors – usually noted as "The Succession Narrative" (2 Sam 7 – 1 Kings 1-2). Between 1 Sam 19 and the death of Saul in the first verse of 1 Sam 25, the narrative of David describes the adventures of David the Outlaw – the time between his realization that Saul wants him dead, and Saul's own death, which allows David to take up his place as the new King. These are the "outlaw years". From a survey of recent commentary literature on 1 Samuel, it seems that there is some, but not significant, attention to the possible legacy of this portion of David's life. Again, I can hear my beloved students who are still following me say: "Yes...ok...with you so far...so what?"

It's that story of the Rise of David...and I got interested in thinking about that story by writing a short encyclopedia article for the new "Encyclopedia on American Folklore" about...wait for it...Geronimo, the Apache warrior! Stay with me here...

Here are parts of my short article:

The Apache warrior, Geronimo, has undergone a striking cultural transformation from a man who was frequently reviled with threats of hanging, execution, or lynching during his life, to become a cultural icon in the later 20th Century, and even into the 21st Century. The name, at least, became familiar to most Americans as the Native-American "honored" by WW2 paratroopers who began the tradition of shouting his name as they parachuted into battle. Before this, however, he was known for quite different exploits in the last half of the 19th century, and into the early decades of the 20th...

A survey of the NY Times reveals a startling array of angry denunciations of Apaches in general, but Geronimo specifically, during the time when his name was the very definition of fearful conflict with Native peoples, especially in the West. For example, in an article entitled: "The Inhuman Apaches" (May 30, 1885), the *New York Times* featured these words: "Kindness and good treatment are thrown away upon such inhuman and bloodthirsty wretches. The blood of the murdered settler will cry from the ground, and the cry will be heard." While still at large, the *New York Times* (Jun 2, 1885) referred to "Geronimo's Band of Thugs," stating:

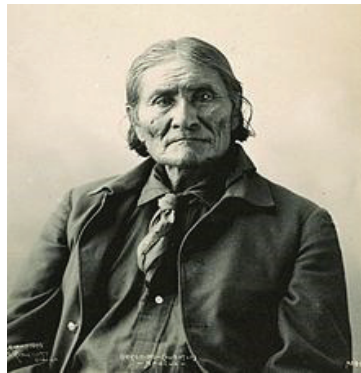
"The troops may not be able to catch these wretches,

who are worse than wild beasts. If they do overtake them, and if any of the Indians shall escape the soldier's rifles, we do not see why those who may survive should not be hanged. They should be punished for their horrible crimes, and their punishment should be either execution or imprisonment for life. Not one of them should ever be allowed to go again upon a reservation."

These attitudes reached a fever pitch in the year that Geronimo famously surrendered for the last time. In "Geronimo's Death Demanded" (Feb 5, 1886), sourced from El Paso, Texas, the Times writes: "The feeling in Arizona and New-Mexico (sic) in favor of the summary execution of Geronimo, the Apache chief, and the surviving members of his bloodthirsty band, is rapidly growing into a demand," and when news of his surrender began to be verified, an article in the Sept. 10, 1886 edition was entitled, bluntly, "Geronimo Must Die": and went on to state: "...There is no doubt that the public sentiment of the country demands the death of Geronimo..."

Geronimo was captured, or surrendered, on four occasions. Geronimo was first captured in 1877, by Agent John Clum, and taken to San Carlos Reservation. Distracted by a Spiritual movement on the reservation led by a prophet named Nakaidoklini (Faulk, 24), Geronimo and a band escaped into Mexico in 1881. In 1884 Geronimo surrendered again and was taken to San Carlos, but troubles broke out again, and in 1885 Geronimo fled with a band, heading into Mexico. He surrendered a third time to Gen. Crook in 1886, but turned back from the Northern march early in 1886 when he sensed that the terms of the surrender were not to be honored. In fact, Geronimo himself recounted his memories of Gen. Crook with disdain, and suggested that the General's death was because "the Almighty" punished him (Geronimo, 132). Gen. Crook was replaced by Gen. Nelson Miles, who launched an intensive manhunt to find Geronimo in Mexico. Geronimo finally surrendered to Lt. Charles Gatewood, a Crook appointee who had left the Southwest, but was an officer whom Geronimo trusted. Miles called Gatewood back into duty, and in August-September, 1886, Gatewood finally convinced Geronimo and his small band to surrender for the last time.

Today, there has been a total transformation! One can purchase an image of Geronimo on a T-Shirt in virtually any major city of the Western United States. Popular attitudes, therefore, have dramatically changed from the New York Times articles in the early 20th Century that regularly demonized him. As Clements further observes, "Geronimo's canonization became official on 23 February 2009" (Clements, 50-52).



On that date, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution on the 100th anniversary of Geronimo's death, and Clements further notes that the resolution included striking wording about his "extraordinary bravery, and his commitment to the defense of his homeland, his people, and Apache ways of life..." and spoke of Geronimo as "...a spiritual and intellectual leader, [who] became recognized as a great military leader by his people because of his courage, determination, and skill' as he directed his people in 'a war of self-defense' (Clements, 52). The historical debates will continue, but the cultural debate is essentially over. Geronimo is a permanent fixture in the folklore of American history.

When I was working on the Geronimo article, I suddenly started to think of those early "David" stories of "David the outlaw". The evasive Geronimo sounded like the equally evasive outlaw David! Let us pull this together now. In Eric Hobsbawn's now famous work, *Bandits* (2000, Revised New York Press: New York, which began as his 1959 work, *Primitive Rebels*) he once reminded all of us that such "social bandits" often are the heroes of many groups of people who feel unfairly treated in life. He writes:

"The point about social bandits is that they are peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any case as men to be admired, helped, or supported" (Hobsbawn, 20).

In other words— what might be called the "Robin Hood" syndrome. Hobsbawn even lays out some characteristics of the classic "hero bandit":

1. The social bandit begins his/her career as victim of injustice
2. He/She "rights wrongs"
3. In some sense, he/she takes from the rich to give to the poor
4. They never kill but in self-defense, or just revenge
5. If he/she survives, they return to their people as an honorable citizen
6. He/She is admired, helped, and supported by his people
7. If he/she dies, it is invariably and only through treason, since no decent member of the community would help authorities against him
8. At least in theory the social bandit is invisible and invulnerable
9. The social bandit is not the enemy of the king or emperor, who is the fount of justice, but only the local gentry, clergy, or other oppressor (For David, The Philistines?) (Hobsbawn, 47-48)

It is striking how many of David's "outlaw years" adventures comply with many of Hobsbawn's defining characteristics of Hobsbawn's "social bandit". Do the early years of David suggest an exilic period fascination with "the Outlaw David"? Were these traditions enlarged and expanded by exiles who wanted a "bandit hero"? Are there other "bandit heroes" for the exiles?

It is interesting how many early Biblical heroes lie through their teeth, usually to those in authority (Abraham, Gen 12, 20; Isaac, Gen. 26; Jacob, Gen 27, 30, 31:20; Moses, Ex 3:18; 5:3; David, twice in 1 Sam 21 alone, etc.). It is also interesting how many "flee" from authorities or "escape" from imprisonment: Jacob (27:43; 31:20, 22); Moses (Ex 2:15; Acts 7:29); David (1 Sam 19:10; 19:12; 19:18; 22:1; 23:13; again and again), Daniel 3 and 6; Jesus (perhaps by virtue of not remaining dead at the hands of the Roman Empire?), certainly Peter (Acts 12) and Paul and Silas (Acts 16). They often live away from authorities and population centers in caves (David, 1 Sam 22:1, 2 Sam 23:13; esp. Prophets, 1 Kings 18:4; 1 Kings 19:9; 2 Chron 16:10; or are imprisoned, Joseph 39, 40). Certainly much more could be said, such as the frequency of stories dealing with the poor as much as in the halls of power, etc. Our very familiarity with these stories may quite falsely distract us from the otherwise rather unsavory, low-class "hoi polloi" characterizations of our heroes in the Bible. Never mind that they are "unjustly accused" (of course, say the prison guards: "...everyone is innocent in here"!). Still, these are not the kind of people (males, mostly) that you want your daughter to date or your son to associate with. They are in trouble. Suspicious. Outcasts. Or, to put it simply, they are exiles and/or despised minorities. Is this because so much of this was the literature of, and for, exiles? Finally, in reference to David, what proof might there be that later readers (that is, after the Exile) were fascinated with "David the Outlaw"?

A survey of Psalms often overlooks something quite interesting. As Declaisse-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner (2014) indicate in their recent commentary on Psalms, there are only 13 "superscriptions" that purport to refer to events in the life of David in the entire collection of Psalms. One, the reference to David's concern with "Cush the Benjaminite" in Ps. 7:1, is an event "not attested" in the Bible (Declaisse-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, 2014, 110), so we have no way of knowing if it was before or after David's crowning as King:

Psalms 7:1 A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjaminite.

Ps. 60 is also somewhat difficult, but it is often thought to come from 2 Sam 8, which does indicate that Joab was over the army at the time of the series of victories that are listed (in a rather perfunctory manner, it must

be said) in 2 Sam 8:

Psalm 60:1 To the leader: according to the Lily of the Covenant. A Miktam of David; for instruction; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and when Joab on his return killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

So, to be safe, I will eliminate these 2 examples from the point I wish to make here. Two more, Ps. 3 and Ps. 51 are also interesting in that they are both references to tragedies in the life of David after he became King: Ps. 3 refers to Absalom's revolt, and Ps. 51 to the Bathsheba affair. Of the remaining 11, *fully 9 of these 11 historical references to David's narrative are references to "the outlaw years"*, e.g. the very traditions we are considering here:

Psalm 18:1 To the leader. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who addressed the words of this song to the LORD on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.

Psalm 34:1 Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

Psalm 52:1 To the leader. A Maskil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came to Saul and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."

Psalm 54:1 To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, "David is in hiding among us."

Psalm 56:1 To the leader: according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths. Of David. A Miktam, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

Psalm 57:1 To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.

Psalm 59:1 To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam, when Saul ordered his house to be watched in order to kill him.

Psalm 63:1 A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

Psalm 142:1 A Maskil of David. When he was in the cave. A Prayer.

Furthermore, the only reference to the life of David in the Synoptic Gospels is an episode from these same "outlaw" period, and arguably quite a notable episode as well:

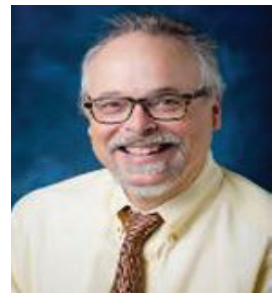
Mark 2:25-28 ²⁵ And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? ²⁶ He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his company." ²⁷ Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; ²⁸ so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath." (Cf. **Luke 6:3-5; Matthew 12:3-6**).

In their entry on "David" in the "A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature" (D.L. Jeffrey, ed. 1992: 180-185, Eerdmans) Charles Huttar and Raymond-Jean Frontain note, in one sentence, that at one point in David's life, he "assumes the life of an outlaw" (181), and note the 14 Psalms that refer to David's story, without noting any tendency among them (182). Robinson's commentary refers to David's "rebel group" (118), and refers to him as a "guerilla leader" (119). But there is more going on here, I think. Was the Outlaw David the Exile's Hero? Are the outlaw stories of David LATER than the King stories? Stay tuned...

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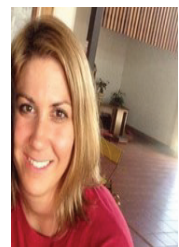
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